

## *On Vecision oj Character.*

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scheme, let him actually prepare to set off. Let him not still dwell, in imagination, on mountains, rivers, and temples ; but give directions about his remittances, his personal equipments, or the carnage, or the vessel, in which he is to go. Ledyard\* surprised the official person who asked him how soon he could be ready to set off for the interior of Africa, by replying promptly and firmly, "To-morrow."

Again, it is highly conducive to a manly firmness, that the interests in which it is exerted should be of a dignified order, so as to give the passions an ample scope, and a noble object. The degradation they suffer in being devoted to mean and trivial pursuits, often perceived to be such in spite of every fallacy of the imagination, would in general, I should think, also debilitate their energy, and therefore preclude strength of character, to which nothing can be more adverse, than to have the fire of the passions damped by the mortification of feeling contempt for the object, as often as its meanness is betrayed by failure of the delusion which invests it.

And finally, I would repeat that one should think a man's own conscientious approbation of his conduct must be of vast importance to his decision in the outset, and his persevering constancy; and I would attribute it to defect of memory that a greater proportion of the examples, introduced for illustration in this essay, do not exhibit goodness in union with the moral and intellectual power so conspicuous in the quality described. Certainly a bright constellation of such examples might be displayed ; yet it is the mortifying truth that much the greater number of men preeminent for decision, have been such as could not have their own serious approbation, except through an utter perversion of judgment or abolition of conscience. And it is melancholy to contemplate beings represented in our imagination as of adequate power (when they possessed great external means to give effect to the force of their minds), for the grandest utility, for vindicating each good cause which has languished in a world adverse to all goodness, and for

\* John Ledyard, an adventurous American traveller, who was born in 1751. He was employed by the African Association to explore the interior of Africa, but he had proceeded no further than Grand Cairo when he was attacked with a fatal disease, and died in 1788.